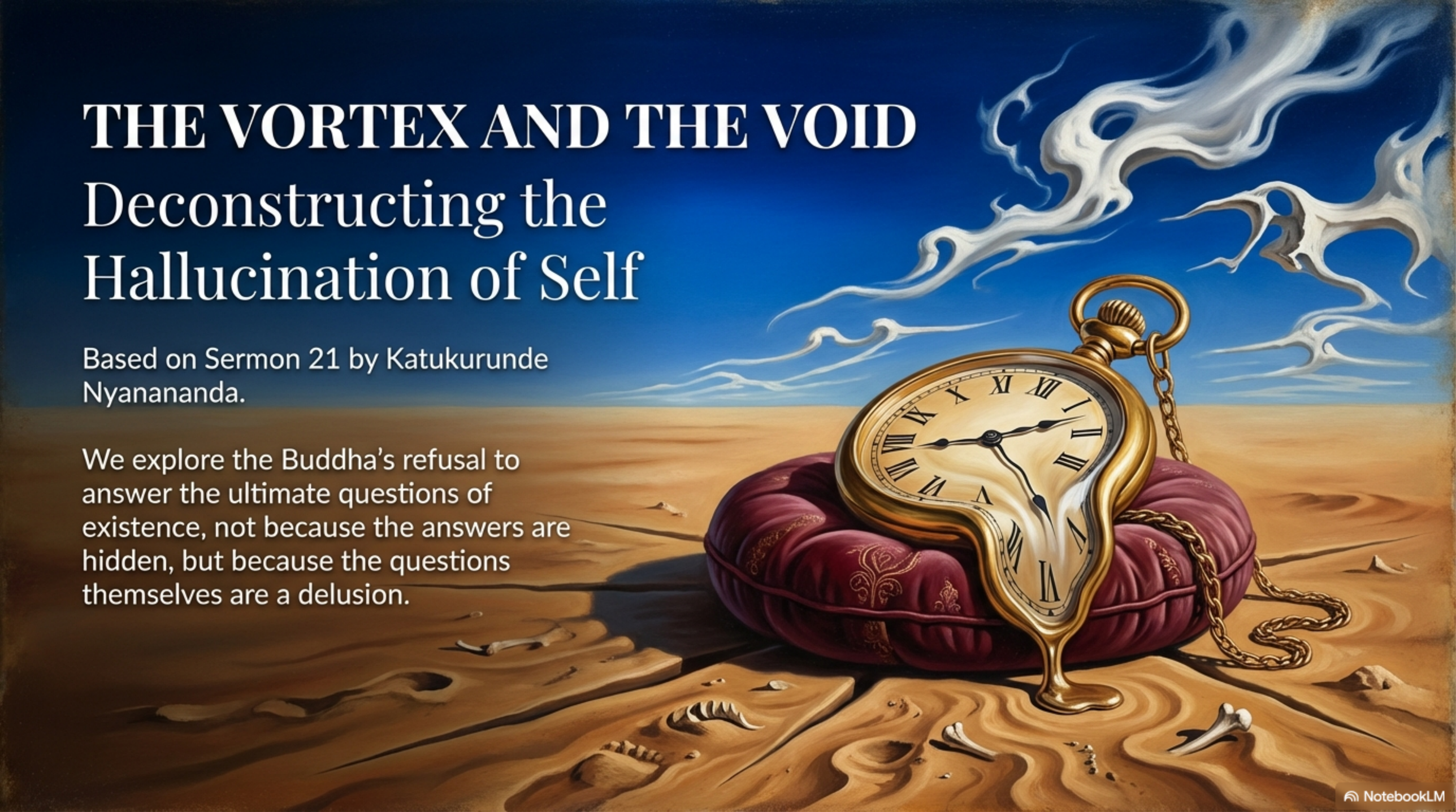
THE VORTEX AND THE VOID

Deconstructing the Hallucination of Self

Based on Sermon 21 by Katukurunde Nyanananda.

We explore the Buddha's refusal to answer the ultimate questions of existence, not because the answers are hidden, but because the questions themselves are a delusion.



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The Logical Trap of the Four Propositions

The wandering ascetics demanded to know the state of the Tathagata (Enlightened One) after death. They offered a Tetralemma—a four-cornered logic trap:

1. Does he exist?
2. Does he not exist?
3. Does he both exist and not exist?
4. Does he neither exist nor not exist?

The Buddha rejected all four. To answer 'yes' or 'no' is to accept the false premise that there was a 'person' there to begin with.

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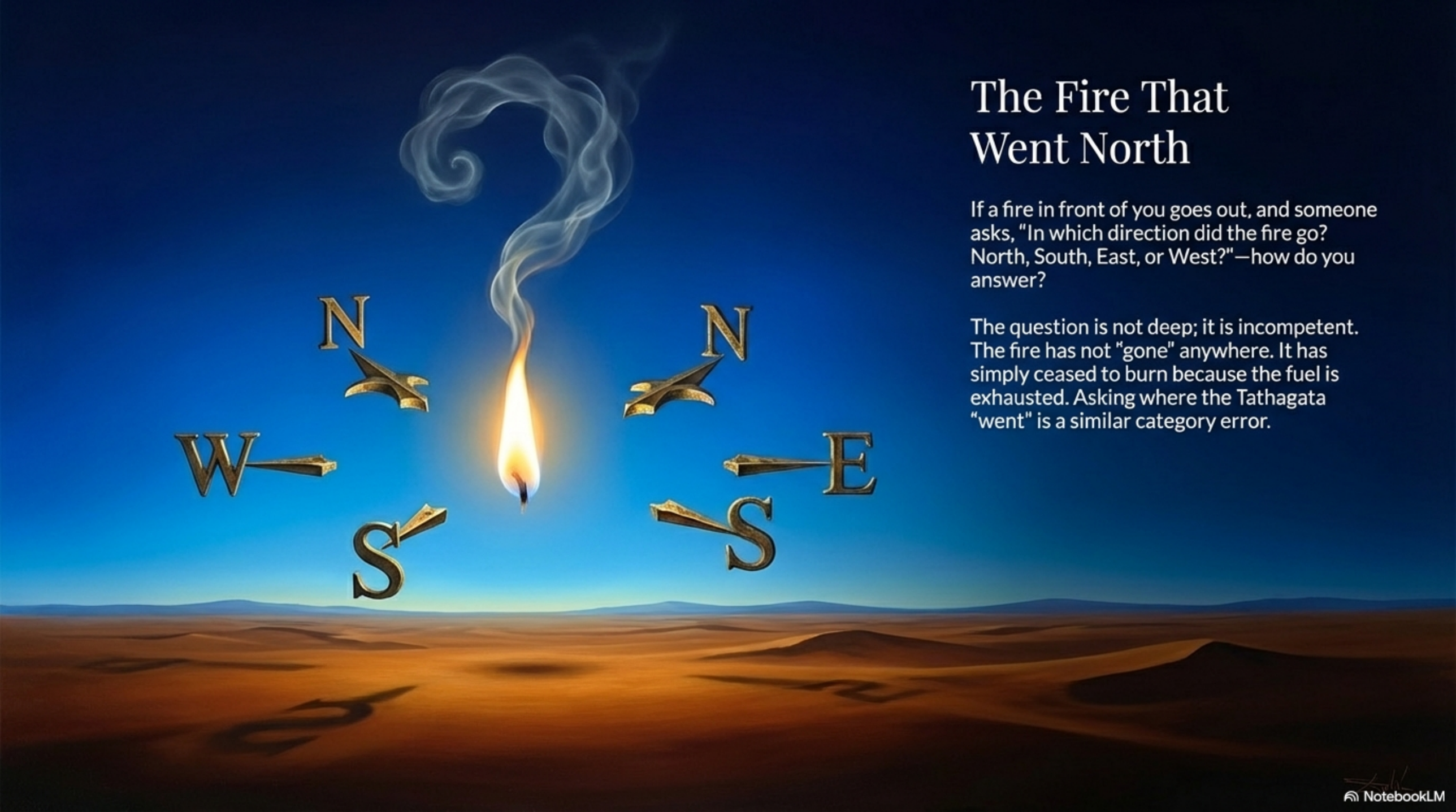

The Fire That Went North

If a fire in front of you goes out, and someone asks, “In which direction did the fire go? North, South, East, or West?"—how do you answer?

The question is not deep; it is incompetent. The fire has not “gone" anywhere. It has simply ceased to burn because the fuel is exhausted. Asking where the Tathagata “went" is a similar category error.

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The Person is a Vortex, Not a Statue

We perceive a “Being” as a solid entity. The Buddha perceives a Vatta (Vortex). A whirlpool looks like a ‘thing’—it has shape, location, and power. But it is just water moving in a circle.

The Vortex is a “cyclic interrelation.” It exists only as long as the spinning continues.

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The Duality Engine: Consciousness and Name-and-Form

The Samsaric vortex is powered by a feedback loop.

- **Consciousness** (Vinnana):
The awareness that seeks an object.
- **Name-and-Form** (Nama-Rupa):
The mental and physical objects of experience.

Mechanism:
They lean on each other. Consciousness grows off Name-and-Form; Name-and-Form arises through Consciousness. This friction creates the illusion of a stable “I”.

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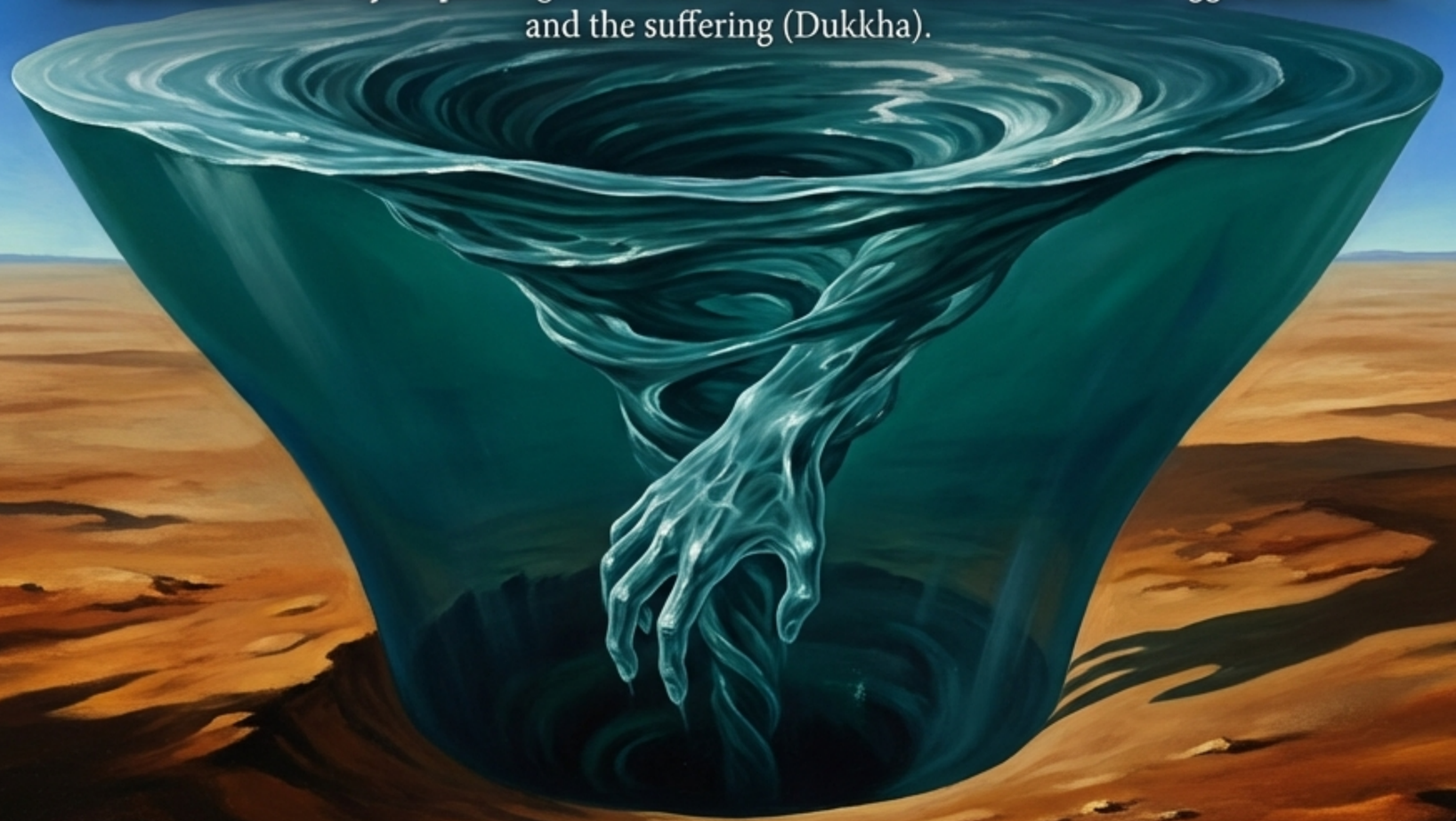
Friction, Suction, and the Craving for Existence

A vortex requires force to maintain its shape. In the mind, this force is Tanha (Craving).

The Suction: Craving creates a "downward suction" that pulls the elements (earth, water, fire, air) into the spin.
The Friction: This rapid spinning creates the friction of "existence"—the struggle, the heat, and the suffering (Dukkha).



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The Etymology of “Being’ is ‘Stuck”

The Buddha redefines Satta (Being) not as a noun, but via the root *sanj*: “to cling" or “to be stuck.”

“Stuck in desire, stuck in lust, stuck in delight... therefore one is called a Being.”

You are not a person who has attachments. You are the attachment itself.

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The Hallucination of Permanence

The spinning of the vortex is so fast it creates the illusion of solidity, like a propeller appearing as a solid disc. This is Vipallasa (Perversion of Perception).

The 4 Perversions: Seeing the impermanent as permanent; the painful as pleasant; the ugly as beautiful; the non-self as Self.

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“Playing with Sandcastles” in Playfair Display

The Buddha compares us to children building “cities” out of sand (the aggregates). We say, “This is my house, this is my wall.”

The Awakening: When the children grow up, they no longer cherish the sand. They scatter it (**Vikirana**). Enlightenment isn't building a better castle; it is kicking the sand structure apart and ending the game.

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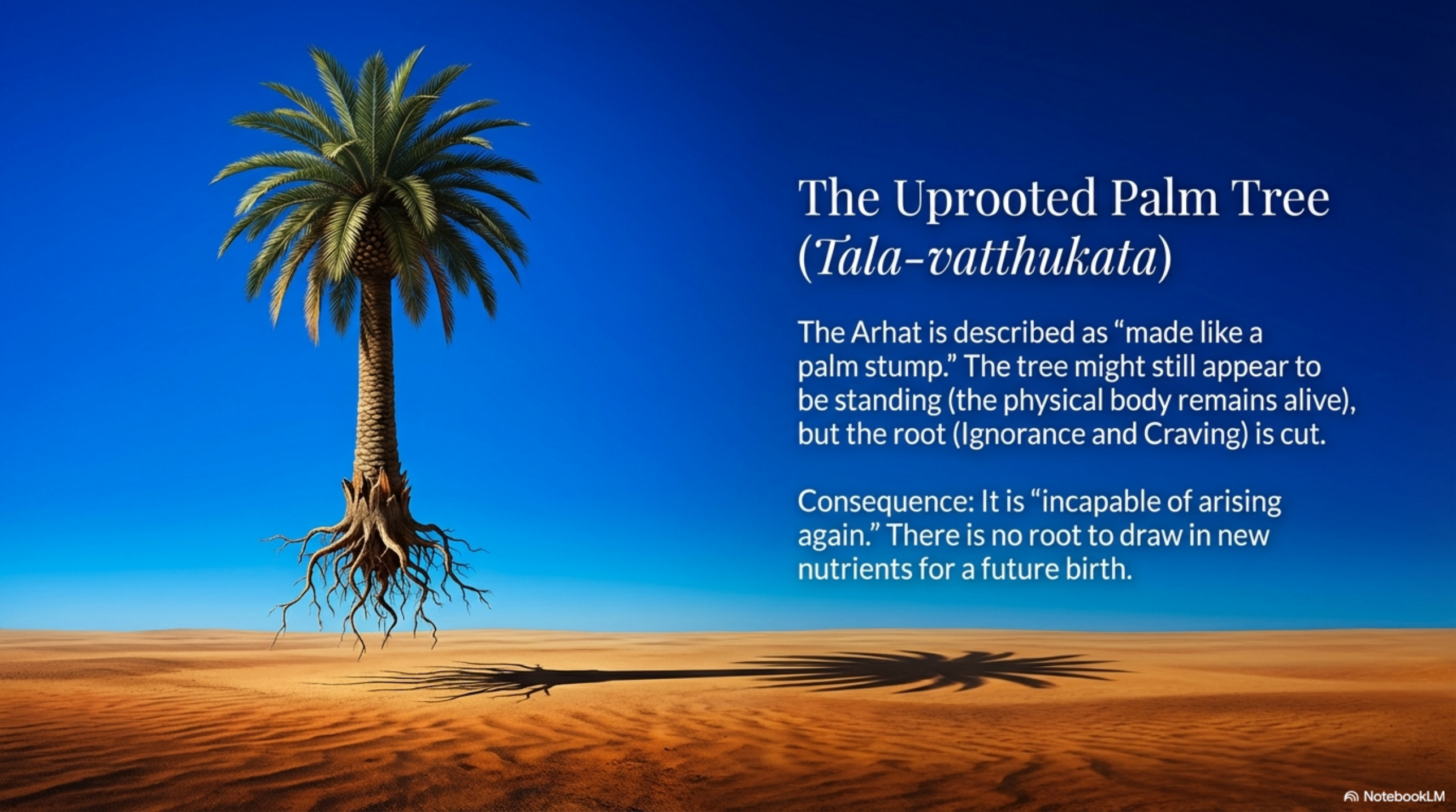

The Uprooted Palm Tree (*Tala-vatthukata*)

The Arhat is described as “made like a palm stump.” The tree might still appear to be standing (the physical body remains alive), but the root (Ignorance and Craving) is cut.

Consequence: It is “incapable of arising again.” There is no root to draw in new nutrients for a future birth.

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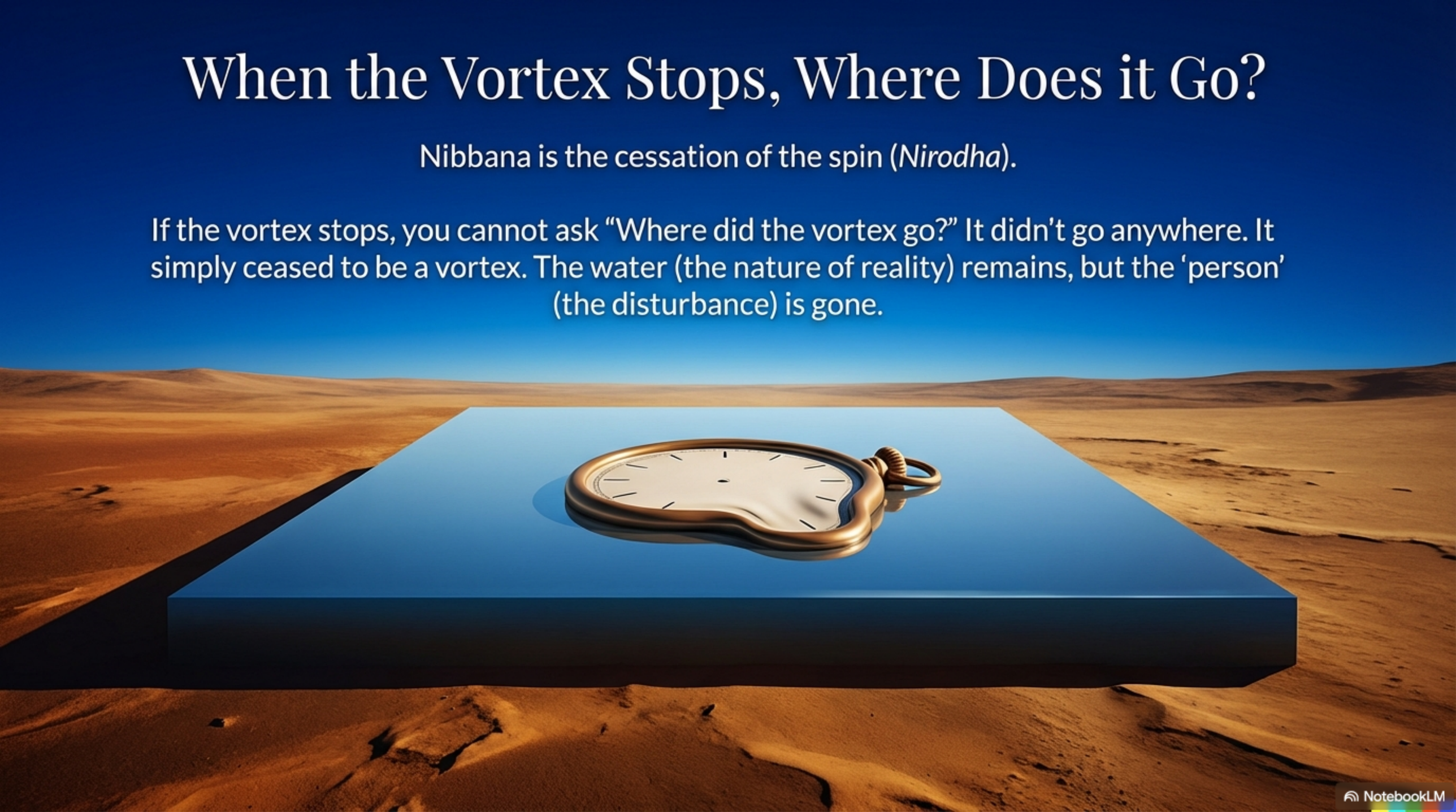
When the Vortex Stops, Where Does it Go?

Nibbana is the cessation of the spin (*Nirodha*).

If the vortex stops, you cannot ask “Where did the vortex go?” It didn’t go anywhere. It simply ceased to be a vortex. The water (the nature of reality) remains, but the ‘person’ (the disturbance) is gone.



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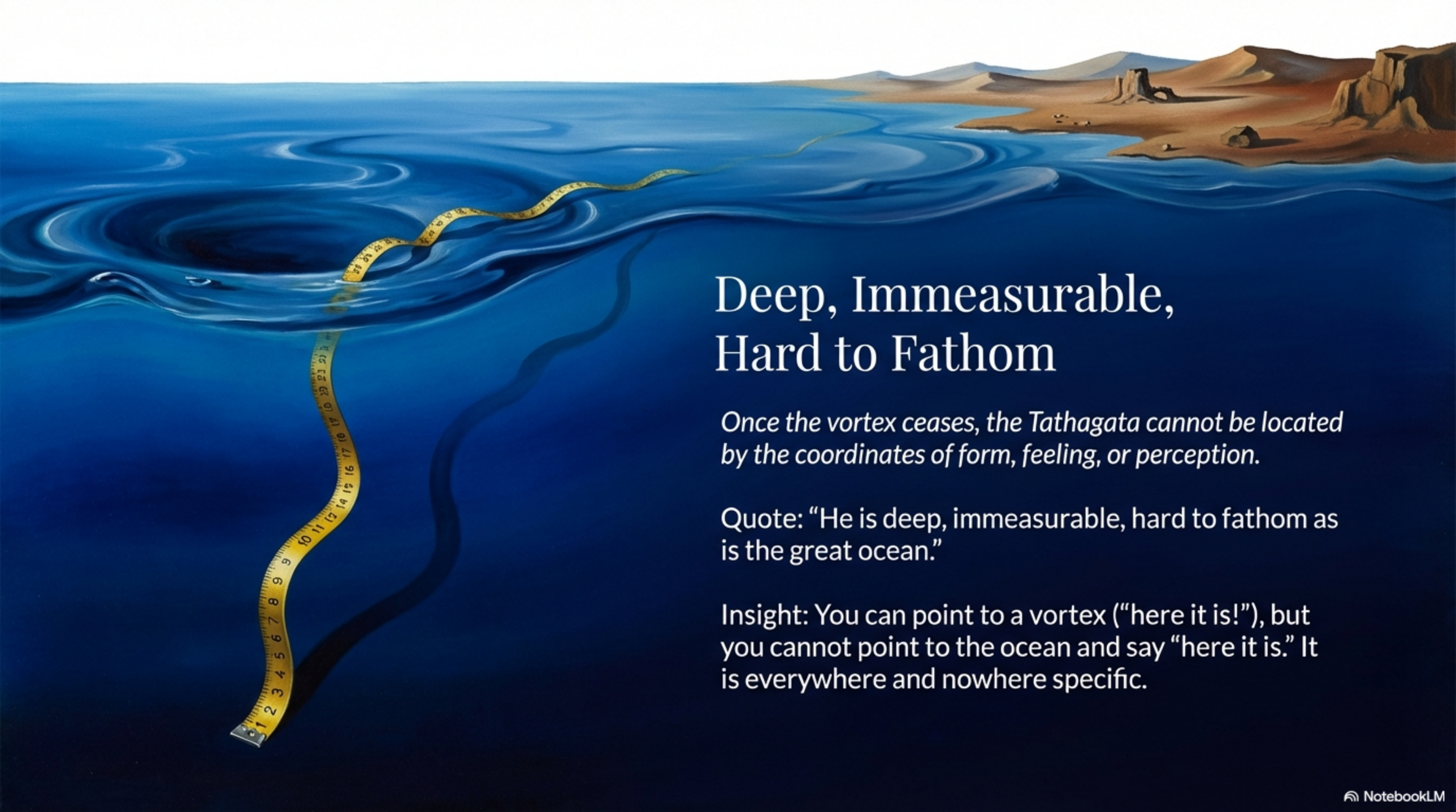

Deep, Immeasurable, Hard to Fathom

Once the vortex ceases, the Tathagata cannot be located by the coordinates of form, feeling, or perception.

Quote: “He is deep, immeasurable, hard to fathom as is the great ocean.”

Insight: You can point to a vortex (“here it is!”), but you cannot point to the ocean and say “here it is.” It is everywhere and nowhere specific.

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The Answer is "Does Not Apply" (Na Upeti)

Why did the Buddha reject the questions?

- Is he reborn? No, the vortex has stopped.
- Is he not reborn? No, because that implies annihilation of an existing entity.

The Verdict: These terms apply only to things that are 'stuck' (Satta). They do not apply to the Ocean.

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Tathagata: Returning to ‘Suchness’

Tatha (Truth/Suchness) + *Agata* (Come/Arrived). The Enlightened One is simply one who has returned to the true state of nature (Suchness).

Closing Logic: The vortex was an abnormality—a struggle against the current. Enlightenment is the restoration of the norm.

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This is Peaceful, This is Excellent.

The destruction of the sandcastle is not a tragedy; it is freedom.

The stilling of all preparations.
The relinquishment of all assets.
The destruction of craving.
Nibbana.

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